Creative Nova Scotia

How Arts and Culture Can Help Build a Better Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Partnership Council
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Background

The Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Partnership Council (NSACPC) was established in May 2003. In consultation with the cultural community, the NSACPC facilitates the development, preservation and promotion of the arts and culture. The Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Partnership Council is a partnership between the cultural sector and the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage. There are 15 members, 13 of whom are volunteers from the arts and culture sector and two are government. These sector members apply through a public call for applicants and are selected through a nomination process to ensure a balance of sector and geographical representation. For more information on the Council, the web address is www.nsacpc.com.

When the Council was established it was mandated to produce a Cultural Development Plan for Nova Scotia's cultural sector. While the first year of operation required significant focus on internal organizational issues, the second year dealt with completing those organizational issues and focussed attention on initiatives that will assist the cultural community more directly. With terms of reference now in place, a thorough nomination process developed and adopted, a code of conduct for members of Council, as well as council member job descriptions approved, the Council has built a solid foundation on which to grow.

The Council wanted to create an articulate, actionable plan for the future of the arts and culture sector that builds on prior work done within the sector. Focus group meetings were held in the summer of 2005 and brought together council members, representatives of the culture sector and individuals from complimentary sectors to assist in building a strong case for culture in Nova Scotia. These focus group meetings and numerous Council sessions also built on the public consultations that took place in 1999 resulting in the culture sector strategy, Nova Scotia's cultural policy, and ongoing sub-sector consultations.

The goal of the cultural development plan is to strengthen connections across the sector, promote connections between culture and other sectors such as health and education, and increase public awareness of the value of culture to a healthy society. This document gives recommendations on how to achieve these goals.

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The Rise of the Creative Class by Dr. Richard Florida, author of the 2002 best-seller, gives us a new way to think about why we live as we do today – and where we might be headed. Florida identifies a fundamental theme he claims is common through changes in our society: **the growing role of creativity in our economy.** He describes a society in which the creative era is increasingly dominant.

In *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Florida chronicles the ongoing change in people's choices and attitudes, and argues that the creative class or creative people are having a huge impact on today's economy and that in the future they will determine how the workplace is organized, what companies will prosper or go bankrupt, and even which cities will thrive or wither.

What is Culture?

Culture is who we are. It is the way we live our lives and the way we identify ourselves. Culture is our story. The arts are disciplines through which we express our story. In Nova Scotia our story is rich and diverse. We express ourselves differently depending on our heritage and environment. Culture and arts go hand-in-hand to tell the world what we are all about and what we value.

Where do we find culture?

Culture is all around us. It brings our communities to life with music, festivals, plays, galleries, crafts, and celebrations of our heritage. It enriches our daily lives through books, magazines, films, television, and the design of everything we use from our furniture to the clothes we wear.

> *"I see us as being in the art business. Art, entertainment and mobile sculpture, which coincidentally, also happens to provide transportation."* [1]

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[1] Robert Lutz, head of General Motors, quoted in *The New York Times*, October 2001

Culture is about the symphony and it is also about a woman from Liverpool who, by playing the ukulele, regained the use of a hand previously incapacitated by severe arthritis.

Culture is about an art gallery, and it is about a five-year-old from Halifax working through his feelings of loss by creating a colourful drawing of a submarine on fire.

Culture is about cutting-edge interior design, and it is about student designers making the lives of medical staff easier by developing a special belt to lift patients from wheelchairs.

Why do we need culture?

Culture is universally accessible, collectively inspiring, and personally powerful. Culture ignites curiosity, thus leading to critical thinking. It sparks the imagination and results in innovation. Creativity is a very valuable commodity in today's changing world.

> *"The notion of creativity must be broadly used, not just to refer to the production of a new artistic object or form, but to problem solving in every imaginable field. Far from being germane to the arts alone, creativity is vital to industry and business, to education and to social and community development."* [2]

Culture engages people with conceptual skills that make them valued workers within a rapidly evolving society. Firms now actively seek out graduates who have a background in the arts because they bring creativity to their work and an advantage to the company.

When culture is intertwined with education, it produces creative thinkers who are better prepared to tackle diverse career options. Students who participate in music have better math scores. Through drawing, crafts, and music, the youngest of our society learn to count, read, and express themselves. We all respond to music, dance and colour. It is the way we all began the learning process.

Culture contributes to the health care system. Theatre and music are being used to relieve stress in health care workers; healing gardens are bringing calm to emotional families; storytelling and art are being used to reduce dementia's effects in Alzheimer's patients – all for less money than traditional approaches.

Culture also performs a role in the justice system by offering guidance for those needing new directions. It replaces despair with confidence gained from creating, which in turn results in higher self-esteem that feeds higher levels of achievement and expectation.

Culture is not an extra – Culture Matters.

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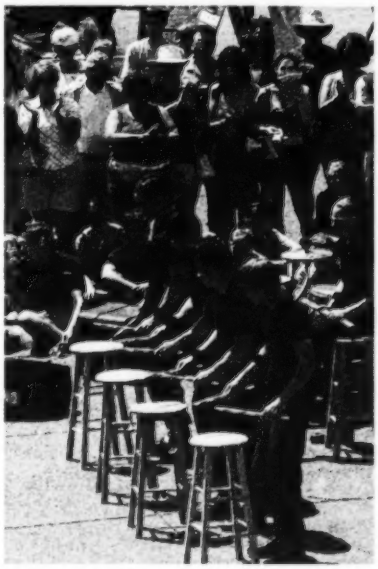
[2] The World Commission on Culture and Development, UNESCO

What can culture do for community and economic development?



Distinctness is a commodity that is increasing in social and economic value. People are attracted to our unique Nova Scotian experience. Supporting and promoting our culture while harnessing the power of our own creative class will bring Nova Scotia to an entirely new level on the world stage.

The culture sector in this province employs 28,000 people directly and indirectly – and they live in every community. In 2002, the sector generated $1.2 billion in GDP activity ($808 million in 1998).[3] It has the potential to grow significantly while generating cost savings, improved efficiency and financial gain to other sectors. It enriches the lives of all of our people and makes Nova Scotia a better place to live.

In a world where people socialize and do business through a computer screen while miles apart, where free trade and global village thinking dominate, cultures are disappearing at an alarming rate.

By showing that we value culture, we are in a better position to attract immigrants. When people look at Nova Scotia as a potential home, they want to see some part of themselves in the landscape, or at least know their culture is welcome in our community. When we support our First Nations, African Nova Scotians, Acadians, and Gaels, we have essentially rolled out the welcome mat. We have shown new immigrants that we embrace cultural diversity.

> *"In the 20th century, it took immense courage and political resolve to deliver universal health care and school education for all. Today these rights are unquestioned, pillars of modern society. I believe we can now make the development of our creative drive, our imagination, the next major enterprise for our society. [...] I believe this has the potential to be a new civic exercise on a par with health, housing, and education."* [4]

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[3] Statistics Canada, *Culture Counts*, 1999 and 2003 editions

[4] Jack McConnell, Scotland's First Minister, *St. Andrew's Day Speech*, November 2003

What can culture do for tourism?

Culture can be a driving force in a vibrant tourism sector. We have success stories that prove the point:

The Celtic Colours International Festival is attracting increased visitors from the United States and around the world. This authentic cultural experience is what people are looking for. When they come, they stay in our hotels, they eat in our restaurants, they rent cars and they spend money on our quality production crafts. Locals who attend the festival share an immense pride in their community. They know that Celtic Colours raises Cape Breton Island's and Nova Scotia's profile nationally and internationally. But the festival is also a gathering place for the community, thereby strengthening its bonds.

The Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre is a heritage-based tourist attraction in which nature and cultural heritage are showcased through Mi'kmaq cultural and interpretative nature trails. As part of this development, nine elders from across the province worked to bring Mi'kmaq perspectives on the past together with the scientific work of geologists and archaeologists. With enthusiasm and insight, the elders very clearly identified what they want protected, shared and communicated for future generations.

Recommendations

What do we need to do in Nova Scotia?

The Nova Scotia culture sector requires financial investment from both the public and private sectors. And although increased investment in the sector is essential, it's not all about more funding. Increased integration and cooperation amongst government departments and across sectors will result in further efficiencies and better value for public money. Supporting arts and culture will create a healthier Nova Scotia, bring added value to education, and ensure greater success in efforts to grow immigration. With our wealth of art and culture, in virtually every community, Nova Scotia is poised to become a leader in Canada. We must capitalize on this opportunity now!

The benefits of culture touch most of our government departments and agendas. Those departments have found ways to support culture from within their own plans and strategies but are not always aware of their impact upon the sector. By focussing its efforts, Nova Scotia can show Canada a new way to meet social, health, community and economic goals – through culture.

Recommendation # 1

Establish a committee with senior representation from key government departments to review the recommendations in this plan and determine how best to focus existing and identify new resources to grow the culture sector in Nova Scotia.

At a minimum, the departments of Health, Education, Justice, Immigration, and the Office of Economic Development should be at the table.

Culture in Education

Since creativity concerns everyone, including young people, studies carried out all over the world, show that art education should be a part of all school curriculums.[5]

Nova Scotia's *Learning for Life* plan sets some ambitious goals. We want to help students improve their math and language literacy scores. We want to meet the newly-set national standard for French fluency. We want to re-engage youth at risk of dropping out, and provide viable alternatives for those who do leave the public school system. And we want to help students with special needs meet their full potential. In short, we want to challenge and inspire all students to be their best.

> *"In the post-industrial economy . . . new media, telemedicine, biotechnology, entertainment, software . . . are built on a fusion of art, science and technology."* [6]

> *"What we require from the educational system now is tools for navigation – methods of analysis, standards of judgement, instruments for critical thinking – [and] that makes the arts central to post-industrial education."* [7]

The ArtsSmarts program brings professional artists into the schools to improve the learning capacity of children by injecting arts into academics.

"This kind of project is so important because it allows students to express themselves, appreciate others and learn to believe in themselves. It doesn't matter who you are, with friends and music you can go far!" (A Halifax Rockingstone Heights student regarding ArtsSmarts.)

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[5] http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1404&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

[6] Ken Robinson, Chair, British National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, quoted in *The ArtsSmarts Story*, Silver Donald Cameron, 2001.

[7] Silver Donald Cameron, Author, *The ArtsSmarts Story*, 2001.

WISH (Writers In Seniors Homes): The Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia plans to build on their popular Writers In The Schools programs by touching on the lives of seniors.

In some United States jurisdictions, schools are also being connected to senior homes. Students spend time with seniors collecting oral histories.

Through this program, the student learns something of the past and how to communicate that story while the overall intellectual and positive emotional stimulation a senior receives is improved.

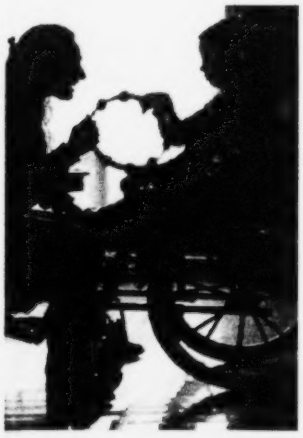
Recommendation # 2

Work with the Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Partnership Council (NSACPC) to identify gaps in existing arts programming in schools and determine what is needed to fill those gaps, thus ensuring benefits for local artists and students. For example:

- **access to school facilities for cultural activities;**
- **increase in programs that utilize local artisans in schools or use arts facilities for student learning.**

Culture in Health

The needs of an aging population (including treatments for health issues) are straining government budgets. We need new and original ways to keep our population healthy.



In 2003, Dalhousie University's Music-In-Medicine program conducted a study to determine the musical tastes of patients with dementia. With a playlist collected, Dalhousie's own TestosterTONES, a sextet made up of medical students, hit the road. Over the next year, the group played in virtually all (60+) of Nova Scotia's long-term care facilities and nursing homes. It was an invaluable, hands-on learning experience for the first-year medical students and a delight for the patients. The challenges and realities facing patients in geriatric care went from theory to human reality for the students – grooming a new generation of compassionate and creative caregivers.

The Medical Humanities Program at Dalhousie University is an active component of recruitment for the university. Students are attracted to Dalhousie because of the chance to participate in the arts.

In the last couple of years, pre-emptive and preventive health care, and the promotion of healthy communities has become a greater priority to our government and our society. In 2002, the province created the Nova Scotia Office of Health Promotion to give greater focus to improving the health of Nova Scotians.[8] Improving our health is everyone's responsibility: government, communities, and individuals.

> *"The effects of health care experiences on children are well documented. Creative activities give children the opportunity to express fear, confusion and anger that are often difficult for children to express verbally. Cultural experiences like drawing, music, clowning and storytelling allows the child to transform pain, promote self-esteem and help children reach their full potential by fostering development."* [9]

Recommendation # 3

Identify current programs that use arts in medicine and;

- **determine ways in which more support for these programs can be provided;**
- **engage in a discussion involving increased investment in the Arts and Culture Sector as a means of promoting more healthy communities.**

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[8] The Office of Health Promotion became Department of Health Promotion and Protection in 2006.

[9] Linda Skinner, Professional Chief, Child Lite Centrewide, IWK Health Centre

Community Development

Arts and culture revitalize neighbourhoods, entire towns, and communities.

In Chéticamp, the regional arts council partnered with the local school to offer cultural experiences to the students and the community-at-large. Their efforts culminated in a full-stage production offered in mid-summer and the development of a unique outdoor performance facility. This partnership has grown community pride and opened a new community economic development activity.

After years of marginalization, the town of Canning is suddenly reawakening. As the home to Two Planks and A Passion Theatre and the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, Canning now attracts thousands of youth and professional artists who, together through the arts, champion innovation and exchange.

Similar stories are told in Parrsboro, Springhill, Annapolis Royal, Mabou, Mahone Bay, Lunenburg, Canso and other Nova Scotian communities. Community-based regional arts councils and cultural activities are driving the rejuvenation of small-town Nova Scotia. Ship's Company Theatre, the Anne Murray Centre, Kings Theatre, folk festivals and craft fairs are all poignant examples.

And this phenomenon is not unique to Nova Scotia. In Toronto, once underpopulated areas now have 24-hour residents, an audience that visits, and daily pedestrian traffic thanks to "Artscape". This City of Toronto-sanctioned, non-profit real estate development model has thrived for more than 20 years. During this time it has given new life to underused buildings which became ideal art spaces for galleries, theatres and artists' studios.

Artscape's property development activities are focussed on the creation of multi-tenant centres that serve artists, non-profit art groups and local communities. When artists move into a neighbourhood, galleries, cafes, and a vibrant street life often follow. In an effort to gain a more sophisticated understanding of the diverse impacts of artists on neighbourhoods, Artscape partners with universities, governments and the private sector to undertake research in this area.[10]

Recommendation # 4

Assist government to achieve community goals through cultural development.

[10] http://www.torontoartscape.on.ca/whatwedo/

Culture in Immigration

Nova Scotia's goal for immigration is that we double the number of immigrants coming to the province, and increase our retention rate from 40 to 70 per cent.

We need this influx of the best and brightest minds in the world to fill vacancies in our skilled workforce, reverse our population decline, and keep our communities thriving.

Newcomers will be attracted when they learn that we are a vibrant community filled with potential and one that promotes cross-cultural understanding, entertains, indulges personal interests, and delivers a sense of place. In short, a creative community.

In his book *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Richard Florida suggests new economically-prosperous societies were not started by business. Instead, they started with an arts community which attracted the information and technology workers – a class of workers who sought the right place first, and the right job second. These highly-skilled, highly-valued workers can go anywhere they want. Let them choose Nova Scotia.

Recommendation # 5

The Culture Sector must be integral to the work of the Office of Immigration as it strives to achieve goals set out in the Immigration Strategy.

Culture in Tourism

Every year, 2.2 million people visit our province, most often to experience our unique way of life. Increasingly, they are seeking authentic experiences, cultural sites, and arts programming. Nova Scotia can build on its amazing reputation for tourism by building on its support for cultural activities and heritage sites.

> *"A major motivator of tourism is learning what is special about a place's culture and heritage."* [11]

Events, exhibitions and festivals are tremendous tourism generators. Annual events, such as the East Coast Music Awards (ECMAs) and the Stan Rogers Festival generate repeat visitors who plan vacations in advance to attend. Like many Nova Scotian festivals, these two have seen years of consistent growth despite ebbs and flows in tourism traffic and economic development.

There are challenges. Cultural events feed the tourism industry but rely upon public and private support to foster growth and sustainability, and the tourism industry enjoys a much greater price threshold for the product it sells. Without cultural producers however, the tourism industry is challenged to attain the capacity needed to ensure sustainability.

Typically, cultural organizations are registered not-for-profit societies and although viable are not profitable. Their efforts do, however, generate profitable activity for others. They attract business for hotels, restaurants, car rental companies, taxis, entrepreneurs and retailers and they generate tax revenues for all levels of government. Over the past ten years, cultural organizations in Nova Scotia have become one of the keys to extending tourism seasons. Today Atlantic Canadian cities bid to host the annual ECMAs, the Juno Awards and now the Country Music Awards because they know that in addition to the busy hotels and restaurants comes television coverage, tax revenues and the notoriety of being a vibrant culture-friendly city.

Tourism operators do not dispute the connection between their businesses and cultural producers. The two sectors are reliant upon each other for growth and enhanced support to cultural organizations will generate a positive return for the province's tourism industry.

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[11] Canadian Tourism Commission, *Packaging the Potential, 1999*

Nova Scotians spend $1,200 per household per year on arts and cultural events (otherwise known as "tourists in their own backyards".) Visitors to our province spend $66 per day while in Nova Scotia, with an average stay of 6.5 days.[12]

The Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Partnership Council and the Nova Scotia Tourism Partnership Council are working to develop short- and long-term joint initiatives intended to benefit both sectors. As a first step, the two Councils have agreed initial actions will focus on a celebration of Nova Scotia music. This initiative will build on a number of the joint projects already underway by both sectors.

Recommendation # 6

Capitalize on the strong partnership between the Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Partnership Council and the Nova Scotia Tourism Partnership Council. Use this model as the beginning of the network needed to achieve meaningful growth in both sectors and determine what other sectors should be included.

[12] 2004 Tourism Visitor Exit Survey

Culture in Business and Science

Creative people: With advancing technology and global competition, today's workforce must be more creative than ever before. The pace at which jobs are changing has never been seen before. The self-confidence, curiosity, and fearlessness fostered by exposure to creative activities, are qualities tomorrow's worker – and ergo his/her employer – must have.

Creative products: Nova Scotia's culture sector is regarded as world class. However, economies of scale dictate that in order for cultural products to make an impact on the provincial economy and to the artists themselves, export markets must be found. In the culture sector, this means support for creation, which is the culture's research and development phase, as vital in this sector as in any sector. It also means support for market development and entry into markets but once there, Nova Scotia cultural products must be able to compete on their own.

Recommendation # 7

(a) Ensure the sector is represented in initiatives under the Economic Development Strategy.

(b) Provide advice in the development of a provincial export strategy for culture products.

©) Nurture and support emerging arts and culture projects that have the potential to become export-ready products.

The Culture Worker

Workers in some areas of Nova Scotia's culture sector have two jobs. One provides the daily necessities of life, while the other allows them to create. While the creative process takes time and energy, these workers are not paid to create. This "R&D" component of the creative cycle is often overlooked and the only compensation the worker can hope to gain is when, and if, the product is a success on the market. These workers have no insurance and do not collect benefits while unemployed, yet we as a society demand the product.

Recommendation # 8

(a) Examine ways in which to link culture labour issues with other labour issues in Nova Scotia.

(b) Develop a plan to provide better support for the cultural worker so that he/she will continue to create (i.e., a group insurance plan for culture sector workers and ensure that cultural workers are included in any skills gap analysis undertaken by the province).

Access to Cultural Activity

So that the many benefits across society can continue and grow, people must have access to cultural activity. Systems need to be put in place to sustain the sector's workers, people, buildings and the governance structures for the many not-for-profit organizations that keep the sector alive. Nova Scotian artists also need to be supported to ensure they can afford to stay in the province. The public needs to see arts and culture as part of everyday life – not separate entities.

We need vibrant cultural activity in all communities, urban and rural, but access is only available if prices are affordable.

Recommendation # 9

(a) Inventory cultural infrastructure and conduct a needs analysis and a multi-year plan for addressing deficiencies.

(b) Increase sources of funding and other support to the culture sector including artists, arts organizations and facilities.

Awareness and Appreciation

It is a known fact that people who attend a cultural activity feel better after attending. Yet the many social benefits associated with participation in cultural activity are not documented in any sort of scientific way in Nova Scotia. Research into this area is needed to demonstrate what the sector has known all along. The results of this research can aid government in making evidence-based decisions when determining future culture spending.

Coupled with pressing needs for the above-noted research, there is also a need to develop an awareness campaign about culture in Nova Scotia – what it is and why it is important. This campaign should be developed in a manner so as to attract more and more people to our many cultural events and attractions.

Recommendation # 10

(a) Conduct research into the "feel good" social aspect of the sector.

(b) Develop an awareness campaign for culture to build local audience participation.

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